

I submit the article by Ambassador Asmerom into the RECORD at this point.

[From the Metro Herald, July 4, 2003]

A TALE OF TWO INDEPENDENCE DAYS

(By Girma Asmerom)

When Americans celebrate their Independence Day on July 4, they commemorate 227 years of struggle to create a free and prosperous society. The fruits of that struggle are here around us, to observe and to enjoy.

America did not emerge from British colonial rule fully formed as a complete, liberal, democratic state. The outcome of the American Revolution was not a foregone conclusion on July 4, 1776, and even after the peace treaty with Britain was signed in 1783, it was unclear whether the 13 colonies along the eastern seaboard would continue to exist in harmony.

The American Constitution (1789) and the Bill of Rights (1791) laid the foundations for a free society. But bumps along the road were sure to come, and they did. The Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 threatened the freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment (freedoms not fully clarified through the judicial process until after World War I). The War of 1812 threatened a loss of independence through invasion by the former colonial power, Great Britain. And although the Declaration of Independence clearly stated that "all men are created equal," slavery did not end until the U.S. Civil War was fought and half a million Americans died in it.

Every American, no doubt, can relate a favorite story from American history that shows how, through trial and error, the United States has evolved—through blood, sweat, toil, and tears, as Winston Churchill put it in another context—making Independence Day celebrations that much more precious.

Imagine, then, what it must be like to live in a country that has been independent of foreign domination for only a few years—to be precise, twelve years.

That is what it is like for my country, Eritrea. After successive colonization by Turkey (1557–1865), Egypt (1865–1884), Italy (1890–1941), Britain (1942–1952), and Ethiopia (1952–1991), we commemorated 12 years of independence just a few weeks ago, on May 24.

Tor three relentless decades, the Eritrean people fought for independence against Ethiopian occupation and incredible odds without any assistance from governments or outside forces. We achieved self-determination through a U.S.-supervised referendum in 1993. We are developing a democratic system in keeping with the values of our people and with their full support. We have indeed taken measures to protect our national security, as is our right—indeed, our obligation to our people. We are proud of the achievements of our country over a little more than a decade.

In that time, Eritrea has challenged the scourge of developing countries, government corruption, which is, admittedly, endemic in much of Africa. I am happy to report that the U.S. Department of State pointed out in 1998: "Corruption is not a significant barrier or hindrance to investment or trade in Eritrea." The distinguished Canadian journalist, Peter Worthington, added: "... while [Eritrea is] the world's newest independent state (1993) and one of Africa's poorest countries, it's also the safest, least corrupt, most self-reliant."

Like the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Eritrea has spent the past dozen years emerging from the strangulation of Soviet-backed Ethiopian occupation. Like the United States in its formative years, six years after its independence, under the pretext of border conflict, Eritrea suffered inva-

sion by its former colonial overlord (Ethiopia), leading to the death of 120,000 Ethiopians and 19,000 Eritreans, as well as displacement of countless families. This war also brought massive economic destruction to both countries.

One of our major challenges is the current unprecedented famine. This is a temporary situation brought about as a consequence of a complete failure of rains last year, in addition to the dislocation resulting from Ethiopia's invasion. To overcome these circumstances, the Government of Eritrea and its people, with the assistance of the international community, are exerting relentless efforts. More can be done, of course, but we are doing the best we can with limited resources.

Success will come. We have as our model Eritrea's achievements in public health. The U.S. Agency for International Development notes: "Despite Eritrea's rank as one of the poorest countries in the world, it ranks 31st in healthy life expectancy." Eritrea has one of Africa's lowest rates of HIV/AIDS infection, only 2 to 2.5 percent; it has eradicated polio; and in 2002, it reduced malaria in children under five by half.

Eritreans, dedicated to their tested vision, as a matter of policy refuse to look for foreign economic assistance to bring economic development. We seek trade and investment, not handouts from our partners and taxpayers. Eritrean-Americans living in communities across the United States are natural lines of communication between our two countries and peoples, encouraging further engagement and future U.S.-Eritrean commercial ties.

Americans have much to celebrate on the Fourth of July. We Eritreans take this opportunity to salute and congratulate the American people on their Independence Day.

#### PAYING TRIBUTE TO FRANK MARTINEZ

**HON. SCOTT McINNIS**

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, July 25, 2003*

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise before this body of Congress today to recognize Frank Martinez for his courageous act which saved the life of Kelly McNeil. The Carnegie Hero Fund Commission awarded Frank a Bronze Medal in recognition of the risk and valor he displayed in this selfless act. I am proud to join my colleagues here today in applauding Frank for his heroic action.

Kelly McNeil was fishing on San Luis Lake with his family when he suddenly fell from his boat into the lake. After an unsuccessful rescue attempt by Kelly's son, Frank swam 600 feet out into the lake to rescue Kelly. Frank proceeded to position Kelly on his back to keep him above water and then made his way back to shore. Thanks to Frank's heroism, Kelly recovered quickly after receiving treatment for hypothermia.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to recognize Frank before this body of Congress today. His brave act serves as a reminder to all Americans of the courage upon which our great nation is founded. I congratulate Frank on the prestigious award that has been bestowed upon him and wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

#### HONORING THE LIFE OF STUART FINLEY

**HON. TOM DAVIS**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, July 25, 2003*

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of my good friend, Mr. Stuart Finley.

Present-day Northern Virginia is characterized by swaths of economic and residential growth, traffic, and the frenetic pace of those eager to get ahead. But amid this hustle and bustle lies the unique community of Lake Barcroft—a place that holds a special place in my heart and in the hearts of all of those lucky enough to have lived along its shores.

Lake Barcroft is a man-made lake located in the vicinity of Seven Corners area of Northern Virginia, offering an oasis of peace and tranquility in an otherwise busy suburban region. As with many such places, the work of a few dedicated souls has been instrumental in creating and maintaining the special flavor so many now enjoy.

Stuart Finley was such an individual. A man whose dedication and industry were instrumental in making Lake Barcroft the special place it is today, and without whom the lake might not even exist.

Over a span of almost fifty years, Stuart dedicated innumerable hours to projects involving the lake. He was an early president of the Lake Barcroft Community Association, then later served as chairman of the engineering committee. But through the numerous positions with different organizations, perhaps the most fitting title for Stuart was "community problem solver." Be it organizing dredging projects or the purchase of the lake itself, Stuart was intimately involved.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, as a resident of Lake Barcroft, I wish to express my gratitude to Stuart Finley and pay tribute to his lifetime of community service. Northern Virginia is a better place due to his efforts, and I appreciate this opportunity to express my regret at his passing.

#### IN RECOGNITION OF JULY 26 DAY—LIBERIAN INDEPENDENCE

**HON. DONALD M. PAYNE**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, July 25, 2003*

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I stand today to mark the 156th anniversary of Liberian independence. On July 26, 1847 a young African American man from Virginia named Joseph Jenkins Roberts declared the colony of Liberia in West Africa an independent republic. The anniversary of this great day provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the history and progress of this nation. The recent civil strife and the impending humanitarian disaster add a sense of urgency to our thoughts.

In 1820, the American Colonization Society founded the Republic of Liberia, with a grant from President James Monroe as a place to send free Black Americans. Over the years, freed slaves and their offspring continued to settle in this small West-African state. In 1847, the people of Liberia declared their independence. They gave their country a flag and a